

finish their first deductible and the 3,000 or whatever we end up with. And that is another question, none of us have read this bill yet.

It now looks like a bill we will consider this week will add prescription drug benefits with minimum offsets for Medicare. It is not fair to our kids to add this responsibility to everybody else's kids and grandkids and my 10 grandkids, and I would hope we look more carefully at this and review it over the Fourth of July recess and come back and try to have a better bill.

This will add enormous liabilities to a Medicare system which is already predicted to be insolvent. Economists calculate that the newly created unfunded liability of such a reform is \$7.5 trillion. This means that a prescription drug bill that adds 12 percent to Medicare's costs comes with a present cost of \$7.5 trillion, or a bit more than the entire public debt. You add this to an unfunded liability of \$9 trillion for Social Security and you end up saddling our kids with a huge debt.

These projections assume that prescription drug costs will grow at the same rate as the rest of Medicare, and that the prescription drug benefit will not be expanded over time. Recent history would suggest that prescription drug costs are growing more rapidly than the rest of Medicare. In 1965, OMB projected that Medicare would spend \$9 billion in 1990. The actual figure was \$67 billion. Having projected \$26 billion in spending for 2003, we will spend \$245 billion. Because medical technology—the cost of prescription drugs will be much higher.

This drives home the point that any expansion of Medicare imposes a cost on taxpayers. Such a reform basically transfers the burden from retirees to taxpayers. More accurately, it means that we are transferring costs from us to our children and grandchildren. We're spending now and sending the bill to people who are yet to be born or too young to defend themselves.

This is selfish and it is wrong. I'm not against a prescription drug benefit if it is responsible. But it must not place heavy and increasing burdens on workers, taxpayers, and the economy in the future. I oppose the bill that is now under consideration because it does not meet this test.

Once again, we have not had an opportunity to see and review a bill on an important topic before we are required to vote on it. It is rumored, in fact, that changes are still being made. Few members will actually know exactly what's in this bill until after it has passed.

I believe that the better approach would be to release the bill tomorrow and then delay the vote until after the upcoming Fourth of July work period. That would allow all of us in Congress to read the bill, consult with our constituents, and make a fully informed decision on a program that could profoundly affect our future and that of our children and grandchildren.

I urge Congress to reject the bill tomorrow so we can take a more responsible and deliberate approach to reforming an important program like Medicare.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. FILNER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. FILNER addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

#### PRESCRIPTION DRUG PLAN SHOULD BENEFIT SENIORS, NOT DRUG COMPANIES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Ms. LEE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to ask Congress to pass a prescription drug bill for our senior citizens, not for the insurance and the pharmaceutical industries. The Bush administration continues to sell our Federal domestic programs to corporations and to industry donors.

Today, hundreds of seniors stood against the Republican prescription privatization plan. They blew the whistle on this. They blew the whistle on this deceptive legislation; and tonight, we too are blowing the whistle. Their bill will dismantle Medicare as we know it.

This prescription drug bill does not provide affordable drugs under Medicare. Instead, it leaves seniors, particularly women, to pay the price for pharmaceutical advertising and insurance industry lobbyists. Democrats have been fighting against these industry economics for years, and we know what a good Medicare prescription drug benefit looks like. It is affordable and available to all. It is inclusive and provides drug coverage for all communities, rural and urban. It includes all seniors and all walks of life without establishing a means tests or a voucher system.

Last week, the House Republicans under the leadership of really the Bush administration released their prescription drug benefit. The Republicans contend that seniors should be forced to use private insurance companies for drug coverage rather than Medicare in order to force competition. But the bottom line is the Republicans are really providing a benefit to the insurance industry and to the pharmaceutical industry.

The industry would have the ability to design their own prescription drug plan. The industry would decide what to charge and which drugs seniors can get. The Republican plan exploits seniors and the disabled by requiring private insurance plans to stay in the program for only 1 year. This could leave seniors vulnerable to unavailable plans, rotating doctors and shifting prescriptions. Just thinking about all of these threats to our seniors really does make me sick.

Tonight I want to focus on women and remind the Republicans of the voters really that they are ignoring. Women in this country will suffer first hand if the Republican prescription privatization bill passes, not only because we live longer, but because we pay into the Medicare system longer. Almost eight out of 10 women on Medicare use

prescription drugs regularly, though most pay for these medications out of pocket. Women on Medicare spend 20 percent more on prescription drugs than men. And in 1999 alone, women on Medicare spent \$430 more a year on medications than men. The Republican bill puts women, it puts our seniors, our disabled really on the industry's chopping block. It should make you really cringe to witness the corporate welfare that the Republicans are creating for the insurance and pharmaceutical industry in their bill.

Since 1980, drug prices have increased by over 256 percent, while the consumer price index on which Social Security's cost-of-living adjustments are based rose just 98 percent. And in their bill they will not even allow our Secretary of Health and Human Services to discuss and negotiate lower prices for their medications. How shameful that is.

In the Bay Area, specifically in my home town of Oakland, California, my elderly and disabled constituents are paying up to \$2000 more a year for basic drugs than in Canada, Europe and Japan. These disparities may seem bad now; but under the Republican plan before us, they will only get worse. I could go on and on, but the point is that seniors and the disabled are paying on average 89 percent more than our international counterparts. This is just dangerous and downright unfair. It is bad public policy.

Our senior women are having to make hard decisions about which drugs they can afford and if they should really buy drugs or pay for food. There is a better way.

Democrats have a low-cost prescription drug plan that does not pit seniors against one another, but makes access to prescription drugs a reality for all. The plan has incorporated many of the components of another plan called the Meds Plan, which many of us are supporting.

Under this plan, we ensure that seniors and people with disabilities have affordable, comprehensive and guaranteed access to prescription drug coverage. The proof is in the details. A \$25 a month premium, a \$100 a year deductible, an 80/20 cost-sharing between Medicare beneficiaries, a \$2,000 minimum for Medicare beneficiaries, and a sliding scale for low-income individuals for up to 150 percent of the median.

Under the Republican plan, let me state that the bill that the Republicans have put forward will really punish people for getting sick. The Democrats will not punish our seniors for getting sick. The Republican plan gives authority to insurance companies and HMOs to really prey on Medicare and Medicaid beneficiaries. The Democratic plan reduces the costs of drugs. The Republican plan does not. The Democratic plan does not end Medicare. The Republican plan does.

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In short, the Democratic plan brings our country one step closer to insuring access to all people for much needed care, while the Republican Prescription Privatization plan is a divisive tool that will enrich the insurance and pharmaceutical industry.

The Republican plan gives authority to insurance companies and HMOs to prey on Medicare and Medicaid beneficiaries.

Unlike the Republican bill, the Democrats won't punish you for getting sick.

I urge my colleagues to vote against the Republican Prescription Privatization bill.

#### HELL IN A CUBAN PRISON

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Mr. Speaker, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH) had a wonderful idea the other week. We should speak every single week about the men and women who are languishing in prisons in the totalitarian state of Cuba, that island that has been for 44 years oppressed by a totalitarian dictator. So each week we bring forth, a number of us here, different political prisoners and speak specifically about their cases to remind our colleagues and those who will listen about the horrors just 90 miles from the shores of the United States.

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The following are excerpts, Mr. Speaker, from a letter from dissident Juan Carlos Gonzalez Leyva who is blind. These excerpts of a letter were sent out of his prison in Holguin, Cuba, as recorded by his wife Maritza Calderin. The letter was sent to the United Nations Human Rights Commission in Geneva.

To Sylvia Iriondo of mothers and Women Against Repression. This is a letter, Mr. Speaker, sent out of prison by Juan Carlos Gonzalez Leyva.

After 13 months in prison, I have not been tried or sentenced by any court even as efforts have been made to persuade me to betray God and human rights and collaborate with the dictatorship. Since mid-December, State security used inmate Joe Prado, as he calls himself, to throw in my cell a substance that produced a burning sensation on the skin and nasal congestion, a great deal of phlegm and bronchial inflammation. The situation still continues.

Since January, they have added another substance to the sawdust they throw at me. This one gives me the sensation of millions of bugs constantly running all over me. It causes a great deal of itching and prevents me from sleeping. I do not know if this is a biological substance or chemical agent, but I know it is not insects because when I touch my skin there are no actual bugs that I can feel, although this sensation is palpable.

Normally the sawdust shower is a daily occurrence. Yesterday it started

around 6:00 p.m. when I was on my knees praying. The sensation is that of a multitude of bugs suddenly coming down on my face and my body. This torment continues until 2:00 or 3:00 in the morning.

The inmate follows me everywhere. I have to eat out of a can that I try to keep covered all the time because he will throw the nausea-provoking substance into the food.

Sometimes I feel as if I have a chain attached to my body and the weight of the world on my shoulders. I feel that I am going to collapse, that I cannot take this anymore, but I pray to God, and Jesus Christ gives me strength. It is a constant struggle, a constant torture.

On February 1, I placed my mattress in front of the cell's iron bar doors to get some fresh air. Officer Fabu, the unit chief, snatched the mattress away from me, threw me on the floor, took me by the neck and dragged me. He told me that if I wanted to sleep, I could sleep on the bare floor with the dirt, other prisoner's shoes, roaches, ants, mice, et cetera.

One night they threw so much of the substance into the cell that it was as if the walls were boiling. So I had to retreat to my bed and resign myself to do without the little bit of fresh air I was getting through the iron bars.

The substance also causes acute pain in both of my eye sockets. The pain is so severe that at times it seems my eyes are popping out. Every day the unit chief threatens me with death if I continue the hunger strike to protest the prosecution's request of 8 years in prison.

They do not allow me to speak to my lawyer and I do not have religious assistance or access to any information. I am only allowed to listen to the round tables and the State-run newscasts. For the skeptics, I can say that hell does exist and Satan shows all of his faces here.

In here, I listen to the weeping of young and old women, their terrible and frightful laments forever embedded in my mind. They plead because they are locked in cells that are like drawers where are held men, women and the elderly, the sick and the incapacitated. They plead because the four walls become a grave site.

These are catacombs where people scream but the sound is drowned out by a hermetically sealed metal door. When the women plead, the prison guards laugh and say, "What they want is a man."

I trust God and our Lord, Jesus Christ, to give me the strength to face any situation, whether to live in squalor, as I live now, or to die and meet my Lord and my God.

The political prisoner of Cuba, Mr. Speaker, 90 miles from the shores of the United States, an island that has suffered 44 years of totalitarian and oppression while the world does nothing, but we do not forget and we will not continue denouncing the horrors of the

totalitarianism that the people in Cuba suffer and we will not stop struggling until Cuba is free.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. GARRETT of New Jersey). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. DEFAZIO addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

#### CHECK WITH THE SENIOR CITIZENS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Illinois (Ms. SCHAKOWSKY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Mr. Speaker, once upon a time, in 1989, there was a bill that had passed the United States Congress and was signed into law called the catastrophic health care bill, and it had bipartisan support, and all of the national organizations of senior citizens supported that legislation, and it was supposed to provide catastrophic coverage to senior citizens for health care.

One problem, no one had really checked with rank and file senior citizens to find out if they wanted this legislation that caused them to have the highest effective tax rate of any Americans, to pay for benefits that they thought simply were not worth it. In other words, the senior citizens sat down with their calculators and figured out they were not interested in this legislation that had passed.

This is a photo that appeared on the front page of the Chicago Tribune in August of 1989. Here we see some senior citizens who are clearly very angry, with signs surrounding an automobile in which was the chairman of the powerful House Committee on Ways and Means. These senior citizens were not exactly in a friendly mood and were telling this chairman in no uncertain terms that they wanted the repeal of the catastrophic health care bill.

It was not very long afterwards that this sparked a rebellion of senior citizens across the country, and in a rare occurrence in this body the catastrophic health care bill was repealed.

I think this should serve as a warning to all of my colleagues. Check with the senior citizens. You can sit here all day and all night and say the problem is that Medicare is outdated, that it is antiquated or you can say what the Chairman of the powerful House Committee on Ways and Means of today said, To those who say that the bill proposed by the Republicans would end Medicare as we know it, our answer is we certainly hope so. Seniors listen: We certainly hope so.

Mr. Speaker, I hope the seniors are listening. Old fashioned Medicare is not very good, says the chairman, the Republican chairman of the House Committee on Ways and Means.